

A Study of Tara Play Through the Application of Rasa Theory: With special Reference to Karuna, Adbhuta and Vatsalya Rasa

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Abstract:

Tara (1990) is a play written by Mahesh Dattani which is considered as a great piece of literary work in Indian writing in English which is able to aware the audience about the discriminative conduct of the Indian society on the basis of gender especially in the higher and educated groups. The Natyashastra; an Indian aesthetics composed by Bharata Muni describes about the Rasa and Bhavas in Chapter-VI. In present paper this play ‘Tara’ would be analyzed by applying the Indian aesthetic—Rasa theory formulated by Bharata Muni. And Karuna Rasa, Adbhut Rasa and Vatsalya Rasa would be explored that have been embedded by the playwright through depiction of patriarchal hegemony, preference of boy over girl child as well as feeling of guilt among the characters. This play provides a concrete base to analyze various types of Rasas as due to the involvement of gender discrimination, parental conflict and attachment, emotional trauma faced by the female characters are able to evoke Karuna Rasa, Adbhuta Rasa and Vatsalya Rasa through the emotions of Pathos, wonder and Parental affection, respectively.

Keywords: Mahesh Dattani, Rasa Theory, Karuna Rasa, Adbhut Rasa, Vatsalya Rasa, Pathos.

Introduction:

Play ‘Tara’ is a story of two conjoined twins, who were unethically separated by Dr. Thakkar in the greed of some prime land and money. Later the story unfolds the reality of the third leg that this leg was of Tara and there were more chances of its survival but, due the gender discrimination, it was given to Chandan, a boy child and at last, Tara lost her life due to the complications of this unethical surgery performed during infancy. The whole story presents a view that how this gender based discrimination is favoured by mothers only against the girls and finally, Mahesh Dattani due to his great craftsmanship is able to make his audience to experience the sad feelings of sorrow and shocks during the entire play.

Discussion:

Elements of Karuna Rasa:

In ‘Tara’ play the character Tara is seen as a systematic neglected girl although she is seen stronger as well an intelligent girl yet during infancy, her mother Bharti alongwith her own father; who seems to be a successful politician and a businessman planned to cut the third leg from Tara’s body and give it to the boy whereas all know the truth that the blood supply of this third leg is connected with Tara but, unjust

fully, Chandan was given this leg and after a short period this became dead piece of flesh on the other hand, Tara has become a handicapped girl. This unjust sacrifice is the first incident, which is prime source of evoking Karuna Rasa in the readers.

Later due to this unjustified sacrifice, triggers Tara's mother Bharti to express excessive love, care and affection towards her daughter as she knows and feels that it was she who despite of knowing each and everything and without taking care of her own daughter decides to get it cut the leg, to nurture her son as a complete boy because Chandan is the successor of that family and she considers herself fully responsible this worst health condition of Tara all these actions of Bharti presents a pathetic, and emotional feelings in the heart of audience for both Tara and Bharti.

And when Patel tells Tara about the Bharti's breach of trust at the time of surgery and Tara's health becomes worst is the moment of the play when one can feel Karuna Rasa. Similarly, the readers also experience Karuna Rasa for Tara's loss of innocence and her life.

Elements of Adbhut Rasa:

Although, in this play, readers see the characters to face tragedies everywhere, whether it is Patel, Bharti, Tara or Chandan while as a father he is not allowed to make an important decision related with the health and future of his children, by making a wrong decision and being responsible for adverse health conditions and death of Tara, facing a lot for her incompleteness and considering himself responsible for her sister's death, respectively. But, in some places, this play also contains some elements of Adbhut Rasa which wonders, shocks the characters within the play as well as the reader of the play such as when Patel mimes conversing with a neighbour:

PATEL. She needs help. I am not sure – maybe some kind of therapy . . . or counselling.
(Collected Plays-329)

PATEL. May be I'm expecting the worst. It may never happen – no. things are getting out of hand. **(Collected Plays-330)**

Similarly, the shocking and unexpected nature of breach of trusts by going through the incident of Bharti's decision related to the surgery, secrets or conversations among the characters, the audience find themselves in the state of stunned such as; Bharti (mother of these conjoined twins), Dr. Thakkar (the surgeon who separated the conjoined twins) and the children of society who acts unbelievably in cutting the third leg of Tara and decides to give it to Chandan shows the shocking aspect of a mother who has become an agent in perpetuating the patriarchal hegemony and again shocks the audience that this decision/action is a conspiracy of a mother against her own daughter to harm her at the cost of granting benefits to her son and the third and most important, the children of that society especially Roopa and Prema, who call Tara a 'freak' which reflects negative as well as harsh reality of her neighbors but, in reality all these freak identity concept is given to her by her own mother and her grandfather.

Dattani, as a great craftsman write this play by using great literary devices and make its ending with overwhelming scenes in which Tara and Chandan; conjoined twins are seen physically separated but emotionally attached/conjoined hugs each other and united spiritually in death, this scene drives the readers to a stage where they feel quite and overwhelming with karuna and leads to evoke Karuna Rasa. Thus, Mahesh Dattani depicted these Rasas, skillfully where trauma (sock) of Bharti's betrayal Tara converts into pity (Karuna) for who is forced to be inferior just because she is a girl.

Elements of Vatsalya Rasa:

In this play, Mahesh Dattani depicted Vatsalya Rasa not in the form of parental love or affection but, in a tragically subversion form as a result of this the vatsalya prem is converted in the form of guilt of Bharti, Patel and Chandan. In the opening scene of the play, Bharti is seen as an intensely loving mother who loves and cares her daughter but, as the story moves forward, the reader came to know about this love and affection of Bharti that she and her father bribed the doctor and got separated the conjoined twins and gave the third leg to her son but after some days this leg becomes a stale piece of flesh. Now, Bharti feels that she has taken a wrong decision and she is found consumed by guilt that's why she is taking extra care of Tara. Apparently, in this play the over-coddling of Tara through her mother is also indicates towards Vatsalya Rasa. Here, after having her heart full with the feeling of guilt Bharti to compensate her daughter and to manage her shame she pretends to protect her daughter:

BHARTI. It's all right while she is young. It's all very cute and comfortable when she makes witty remarks. But let her grow up. Yes, Chandan. The world will tolerate you. The world will accept you – but not her! Oh, the pain she is going to feel when she sees herself at eighteen or twenty. Thirty is unthinkable. And what about forty and fifty! Oh God!

On the other hand, in the beginning, Patel is observed as distant towards the girl child Tara but, after that the readers came to know that it was Patel who was against the surgery and he is so distant as he was fully aware of the consequences of that unethical surgery.

PATEL. A scan showed that a major part of the blood supply to the third leg was provided by the girl. Your mother asked for reconfirmation. The result was the same. The chances were slightly better that the leg would survive . . . on the girl. Your grandfather and your mother had a private meeting with Dr. Thakkar. I wasn't asked to come. That same evening, your mother told me of her decision. Everything will be done as planned. Except – I couldn't believe what she told me – that they would risk giving both legs to the boy . . . May be if I had protested more strongly! I tried to reason with her that it wasn't right and that even the doctor would realize it was unethical! The doctor had agreed, I was told. It was only later I came to know of his intention of starting a large nursing home—the largest in Bangalore. He had acquired three acres of prime land – in the heart of the city – from the state. Your grandfather's political influence had been used. A few days later, the surgery was done. As planned by them, Chandan had two legs – for two days. It didn't take them very long to realize what a grave mistake they had made. The leg was amputated. A piece of dead flesh which could have – might have – been Tara. Because of the unusual nature of the operation it was easy to pass it off as a natural rejection. I – I was meaning to tell you both when you were older, but . . . **(Collected Plays-378)**

Here, the readers find Patel as a looser in preventing her daughter and due to fake image created by Bharti as 'the pretender of her daughter' both of his children turn against him and he has to face his own children Tara and Chandan.

Conclusion:

Thus, by analyzing the play 'Tara', it is possible to come to the conclusion that this play cannot present just one Rasa to the audience of today. After studying this play, written by Mahesh Dattani in the light of

Sanskrit theory of Rasa, the readers experience a variety of Rasas like; Karuna Rasa is seen or felt through the pathos of systematic neglect as well as the cruelty of Tara's own mother and grandfather, who prefers the well-being of a boy child over the life of a girl. Adbhut Rasa is seen/felt when the readers go through the play and they are stunned when the shocking reality of betrayal of a mother is revealed, when the reader came to know that the surgeon Dr. Thakkar just because of bribe (a piece of land in prime location & some money) separated the conjoined unethically all these events are taken as a shocking wonder, this also evokes Adbhut Rasa among the readers.

Apart from this, in the play there are several incidents where the readers see the act of Bharti harming her own daughter and lastly, calling Tara a 'Freak' by Roopa, Prema and other girls is the source of evoking Adbhut Rasa.

The essence of Vatsalya Rasa is seen on various places in the play as in the opening scene of the play, the readers find Bharti consumed by guilt that's why she is taking extra care of Tara to overcome the feeling of guilt and to manage her shame she pretends to protect her daughter. But, due to this, Patel has to suffer a lot from his own children and Bharti turns Tara and Chandan against their own father.

In Tara, Mahesh Dattani skillfully included multiple emotions of various Rasas but, Karuna Rasa and Adbhut Rasa are the main/dominated Rasa in this play but, readers also experience Vatsalya Rasa and Bibhatsa Rasa as well.

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